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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
09/463,042	06/26/2002	Hanshan Dong	360.6933USU	5798
7590	03/19/2004			
Paul D Greeley Ohlandt Greeley Rugiero & Perle Suite 903 One Landmark Square Stamford, CT 06901			EXAMINER WYSZOMIERSKI, GEORGE P	
			ART UNIT 1742	PAPER NUMBER

DATE MAILED: 03/19/2004

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

09/463,042

Applicant(s)

DONG ET AL.

Examiner

George P Wyszomierski

Art Unit

1742

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☐ Responsive to communication(s) filed on ____.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-19 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) ____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☒ Claim(s) 2,3 and 16-18 is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1,4 and 7-12 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☒ Claim(s) 5,6,13-15 and 19 is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) ____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☒ The drawing(s) filed on ~~18 January 2000~~ ^{26 JUNE 2002} is/are: a) ☒ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☒ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☒ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
- ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 - ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. ____.
 - ☒ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).
- * See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- 1) ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- 3) ☒ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date 20000118.
- 4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date. ____.
- 5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
- 6) ☐ Other: ____.

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1. Claim 19 is objected to because of the following minor informalities: In this claim, the phrase "wherein a further layer" should be changed to --further comprising a layer--, and the word "is" should be deleted.

2. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

3. Claims 1, 4, and 7-12 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Kemp (U.S. Patent 5,316,594).

Kemp discloses surface hardening a refractory metal workpiece (e.g. zirconium) by heating the workpiece to a temperature as recited in instant claims 1 and 9-12 and exposing the workpiece to an appropriate combination of gases to produce a desired hardened surface. Kemp, column 10, lines 46-54 discloses fluidizing in air (i.e. a combination of nitrogen and oxygen) for a period of time followed by treatment in a combination of argon and four mole percent oxygen. Such a treatment would appear to form the diffused oxide layer as recited in the instant claims. With regard to instant claim 8, the examiner's position is that repeating the steps of a known process any given number of times, to achieve a known result, does not define a patentable process. Consequently, a prima facie case of obviousness is established between the disclosure of Kemp and the presently claimed invention.

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4. Claims 5, 6 and 13-15 are objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. The prior art does not disclose or suggest performing the steps of the claimed process for the time periods as defined in claims 5, 6 and 15 or using the pressures as defined in claims 13 and 14. Claims 2, 3, and 16-19 are allowable over the prior art of record (subject to correction of the objection to claim 19 noted supra). The prior art does not disclose or suggest an article having a hardened case with the sigmoid shaped hardness profile as defined in claim 16, or the method of achieving such as defined in claim 2.

5. The remainder of the art cited on the enclosed PTO-892 and 1449 forms is of interest. This art is held to be no more relevant to the claimed invention than the art as applied in the rejections, supra. Some of this art was filed and/or published subsequent to the priority date of the present invention.

6. Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to George Wyszomierski whose telephone number is (571) 272-1252. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday thru Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Eastern time.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Roy King, can be reached on (571) 272-1244. Effective October 1, 2003, all patent application related correspondence transmitted by facsimile must be directed to the central facsimile number, (703) 872-9306.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).


GEORGE WYSZOMIERSKI
PRIMARY EXAMINER

GPW
March 11, 2004